

Arcamo, Judith

From: sjokeeffe@gmail.com on behalf of Stephanie O'Keeffe [stephanie@okeeffe.com]
Sent: Wednesday, January 27, 2010 8:55 AM
To: Arcamo, Judith
Subject: Fwd: FW: Online posting of meeting agandas and minutes of Town boards and committees
Attachments: Select Board.Agenda and minutes online postings.Table.doc

Hi Judith--

Please include this e-mail and its attachments in our packets this week. Thank you.

Stephanie

----- Forwarded message -----

From: Select Board <SelectBoard@amherstma.gov>
Date: Mon, Jan 25, 2010 at 3:55 PM
Subject: FW: Online posting of meeting agandas and minutes of Town boards and committees
To: "Weiss, Gerald" <WeissG@amherstma.gov>, "Brewer, Alisa" <avbrewer@comcast.net>, stephanie@okeeffe.com, dstein@mtholyoke.edu, "Shaffer, Larry" <ShafferL@amherstma.gov>, "Hayden, Aaron" <aahayden@amherst.edu>

From: Kevin Eddings[SMTP:KJEDDINGS@GMAIL.COM]
Sent: Monday, January 25, 2010 3:56:55 PM
To: Select Board
Subject: Online posting of meeting agandas and minutes of Town boards and committees
Auto forwarded by a Rule

Dear members of the Select Board:

Attached is an MS Word file containing tables I've prepared to summarize the frequency with which the boards of committees of our town government post their meeting agendas and minutes on the Town's website.

I believe that the number of active town boards and committees is approximately 50. Presently, 34 of them are listed on the "Archive Center" webpage of the Town's website, <<http://www.amherstma.gov/Archive.aspx>>.

The information used to prepare the attached tables was obtained from that webpage on January 8 and from the Town Clerk's office that same week.

I compiled this data because I sometimes check online for the minutes of a recent board or committee meeting or for the agenda of an upcoming meeting. My experience has been that although the Town's website is set up to make this information available should it be provided, it is frequently not provided. The attached tables summarize that data and indicate that this is the case.

My understanding is that the timely posting of online agendas and minutes has been and remains a concern of the Select Board, although efforts to address this have not been entirely successful, as the attached indicate. For example, of the 34 committees and boards for which data was available when these tables were prepared, only one, *Planning*, had an online agenda posted for its next meeting (Table 1). Another, *Community Development*,

had not posted its minutes online for 344 days (and counting). Nine of the 34 examined had not posted online agendas or minutes, or both, for any of their meetings (Table 2). Additionally, at least eight of the Town's active boards and committees are not listed on the "Boards and Committees" webpage of the Town's website (Table 3).

I'm writing to request that the attention of the Select Board be again focused on the above. I believe that one step towards improving that availability would be to amend sections 4.7, *Posting*, and 4.8, *Recordkeeping*, of the Town's *Appointed Committee Handbook* to state that it is town policy that the meeting agendas of Town boards and committees be posted on the Town's website at least 24 hours prior to meetings (although I understand that agendas are sometimes not finalized until later than that) and that minutes be posted there within 24 hours after their approval. Additionally, I suggest that boards and committees be advised of these changes, that the Town offer whatever reasonable assistance is needed to comply with them, and that compliance be encouraged, facilitated, and monitored by the appropriate liaison of the Select Board to each board and committee.

The number of boards and committees in Amherst is impressive. That each is staffed entirely by volunteers is remarkable, and testament to the extent to which citizens are involved in governing the town where only the "h" is silent. Timely online posting of meeting agendas and minutes increases the transparency of this governance; encourages informed involvement of the public in its affairs; facilitates the work of boards and committees, all of which work alongside each other; and makes their efforts to serve the Town more evident.

Many thanks for the work that you do.

Sincerely,

Kevin Eddings

Table 1. Online Postings by Town Boards and Committees of their Meeting Agendas and Minutes
Data collected on January 8, 2010

Board/Committee	Last meeting ¹	Last meeting with agenda posted on Town website ²	Number of days between last meeting with agenda posted on Town website and last meeting ²	Last meeting with minutes posted on Town website ²	Number of days between last meeting with minutes posted on Town website and last meeting ²
Agricultural	12/9/09	4/14/09	239	8/11/09	120
Amherst Redevelopment Authority	Before 9/1/09	None posted	---	None posted	---
Board of Assessors	12/7/09	3/12/09	270	2/10/09	266
Board of Health	1/7/10	1/7/10	0	11/19/09	42
Budget Coordinating Group	1/7/10	12/17/09	21	12/03/09	35
Community Development	1/5/10	None posted	---	2/4/09	341
Community Preservation Act	1/7/10	10/15/09	21	10/15/09	84
Committee on Homelessness	1/7/10	10/29/09	70	11/13/09	55
Community Voices/Budget Choices (Facilitation of Community Choices)	before 9/1/09	None posted	---	12/1/08	---
Conservation	12/9/09	10/14/09	56	8/26/09	105
Council on Aging	1/7/10	1/7/10	0	11/12/09	56
Design Review	1/5/10	1/5/10	0	11/17/09	47
Disability Access Advisory	12/15/09	10/13/09	63	6/16/09	182
Community Voices/Budget Choices (Facilitation of Community Choices)	before 9/1/09	None posted	---	12/1/08	---
Finance	12/17/09	12/17/09	0	12/12/09	5
Historical	12/8/09	11/12/09	26	8/13/09	117
Housing Partnership-Fair Housing	1/4/10	None posted	---	10/7/09	89
Human Rights	12/17/09	10/15/09	63	9/24/09	84
Joint Capital Planning	Before 9/1/09	2/5/09	---	3/26/09	---
Kendrick Park	Before 9/1/09	7/9/09	---	4/2/09	---
Local Historic District Study	12/8/09	11/17/09	21	None posted	---
LSSE	12/8/09	None posted	---	7/23/09	138
Master Plan	Before 9/1/09	8/12/09	---	1/27/09	---
Nyeri Sister City	12/3/09	None posted	---	None posted	---
Personnel	12/15/09	9/1/09	105	12/2/09	13
Planning	12/16/09	1/06/10	-21 ³	12/2/09	14
Public Shade Tree	12/14/09	None posted	---	11/9/09	35
Public Transportation (and Bicycle)	12/22/09	12/22/09	0	11/17/09 (Draft)	35

Public Works	12/1/09	12/1/09	0	10/6/09	56
Recycling and Refuse Management	12/17/09	11/5/09	42	9/3/09	105
Select Board	1/4/10	1/4/10	0	12/7/09	25
Town Commercial Relations	1/7/10	3/30/09	283	5/28/09	224
Town Meeting Coordinating	1/7/10	1/7/10	0	11/24/09	42
Water (Supply Protection)	10/22/09	None posted	---	None posted	---
Zoning Board of Appeals	12/17/09	12/17/09	0	Only decisions are posted	---
Zoning Subcommittee	?	12/16/09	n = 23, x = 54	12/16/09 (draft)	7

n = 34

n = 25, x = 91

¹As reported by the Town Clerk's office.

²As reported on <<http://www.amherstma.gov/Archive.aspx>>.

³The only board/committee at the time this data was collected to have an agenda posted online for a meeting that had not yet been held.

Table 2. Boards and Committees listed on Town's website with no agendas and/or minutes posted online

	No agendas posted online (8)	No minutes posted online (4)
Community Development	x	
Facilitation of Community Choices	x	
Housing Partnership-Fair Housing	x	
LSSE	x	
Local Historic District		x
Nyeri Sister City	x	x
Public Shade Tree	x	
Redevelopment Authority	x	x
Water (Supply Protection)	x	x

Table 3. Boards and Committees not listed under "Boards and Committees" on Town's website (8) (not a complete listing)

Amherst Housing Authority
Cultural
Hampshire Regional Emergency Planning
Kanegaski Sister City
La Paz Centro Sister City
Norwottuck Rail Trail Advisory
Public Arts
Puffer's Pond